HISTORY AND COAT-TAILS

In the late 19th Century, the Prussian statesman Bismark remarked that "we can only wait until we hear the footsteps of God in history and then leap forward and try to catch His coat-tails." He is commenting on the flow of events and ideas through time that make up our earthly existence, and the reality of being caught up in that flow in the present moment. In order to move forward in harmony with that inevitable current, we must try to recognize the pattern in the past ("the footsteps of God in history"), and join the current in the present ("leap forward and try to catch His coat-tails").

That is a poetic way of saying that to make decisions for the future, we must be aware of the sequence of events and evolution of ideas that have led up to where we are now, so that we are not left behind in the wake of ongoing events. In short we must know our history.

But history is more than a listing of dates and events. That is a mere chronology. As the historian William McNeill reveals: "to become a history, facts have to be put together into a pattern that is understandable and credible; and when that has been achieved. the resulting portrait of the past may become useful as well..." History is ultimately a story. One which tells how things got to be the way they are today.

The following story, "A Tale from the Future," is an attempt to link the development of the American Massage Therapy Association to the history of the practice of massage in our society's recent past. In many ways, the AMTA can be seen to be reactionary in relation to what was going on, e.g., to the tainted image of massage in the last 40 years. In other ways, it has been successful in joining the flow of events, as in the current revived interest in massage for sports.

Some of the situations we find ourselves in today are more understandable from the perspective of the past, and conversely, the pattern of events in the past tends to become clearer with the passage of time. It is difficult to tell what recent events will ultimately have long-term inportance. We can only speculate for now. Time will tell the truer story.

To get at least some intellectual perspective, I wrote the story from the viewpoint of the year 2043, which will be the centennial year for the present AMTA. The tale recounts the evolution of the American Association of Masseurs and Masseuses of the past, to the American Massage Therapy Association of today, to the International Alliance for Touch Therapies of the future. So besides trying to trace the past, I have skipped through the present time straight in to the future — at least a possible, maybe probable, future given the present.

A TALE FROM THE FUTURE

It is the year 2043, and the International Alliance for Touch Therapies celebrates their centennial year at the Annual Convention in August in Stockholm, Sweden. They reminisce about their humble beginnings in America as the American Association of Masseurs and Masseused (A.A.M.M.), and commemorate their 100 year heritage of promoting massage and other touch therapies as natural healing arts and sciences.

It has been 40 years since the parent organization in America, the American Massage Therapy Association (formerly the A.A.M.M.), spearheaded the movement to ally with similar organizations all over the world. As early as 1970 at the Chicago Convention, the idea was first proposed that a future convention be held outside of America, e.g., Germany or England.[1] By 1987 there was yet to be a convention out of the country, but Canada was being considered as a site, and the International Affiliate Member classification was created.[2]

The movement for the International Alliance was a response to a worldwide rebirth of interest in natural therapies, growing resources in the AMTA itself, and a merging with the greater movement toward a world community. Being able to grow and change with the times has assured the organization that they would contunue to exist and serve the greater purpose to which they are committed. Change for change sake had been largely avoided, but development toward maturity required the courage to change some simple things like terms used to describe the field, and some more substantial aspects such as image and focus.

While the central focus of the organization has always been to promote the practice of massage and other natural touch therapies, that practice has taken different forms throughout the past decades. Just a look at the first 45 years of the organization, and the preceding

decades, gives us an idea of how the words and images that depict the practice of massage and, later, other touch therapies have varied as those practices have evolved with the times.

Terms from the Early 20th Century

At the time the original organization was formed in 1943, it was quite acceptable to call those who performed massage "masseurs" and "masseuses." Those two terms gave a respectable image to soft tissue manipulators as opposed to the former designation as "rubbers" or "shampooers" of the Turkish Baths. The term "rub down" did not convey the knowledge and skill required to perform the "new" scientific manipulations developed in the 19th and early 20th Centuries.

The term "medical gymnast" had a short period of popularity in the late 19th Century. It was used mainly in connection with the Swedish system of passive movements developed by Pehr Ling, and which came to American shores in the 1880's. It was a confusing term since "gymnast" is associated with a specific sport in most people's minds. To Ling, all movements were "gymnastics" and medical gymnastics consisted of active and passive movements including soft tissue manipulation.

By the early 20th Century, America and most of Europe had accepted the French terminology for soft tissue manipulation used by Dr. Metzger of Amsterdam and brought to Sweden by the Swedish physicians, Berghman and Heleday. By the time the practice came to America via Sweden, it was known as massage, or more frequently, Swedish massage — a confusion of ethnic identity.[3]

But MASSAGE it was, with the attendant French terms EFFLEURAGE, PETRISSAGE, FRICTION and TAPOTEMENT. The massage treatment was performed by MASSEURS AND MASSEUSES In a session sometimes called a SEANCE.

Frequently an old French term, PARLOR, was used to designate the place where a MASSAGE SEANCE could be received. The term was quite common and was used in conjunction with other services, e.g., the beauty parlor and the funeral parlor. Sometimes another French term, SALON, was used, as in beauty salon, and as late as 1987, tanning salon.

And so in the early 1900's, outside of a medical setting, one might get a MASSAGE from a MASSEUR or MASSEUSE during a SEANCE at a MASSAGE PARLOR or SALON.

During the same period, one would receive a SCIENTIFIC MEDICAL MASSAGE from a MASSEUR, MASSAGE OPERATOR, or later MECHANO-THERAPIST or PHYSIO-THERAPIST, at a CLINIC or in a HOSPITAL MASSAGE or PHYSIO-THERAPY DEPARTMENT.

Since massage, an ancient touch therapy, was used to treat physical and some psychological disorders (e.g. neurasthenia), the recipient was called a PATIENT. But by the 1890's, massage was used as a sort of "wellness" treatment by the "society ladies" of the time and so PATIENT, with its connotations of illness didn't exactly fit in those cases. Hartvig Nissen called these women CUSTOMERS ("I can hardly call her patient.")[4]

Search for a Separate Identity

In 1943, when the American Association of Masseurs and Masseuses was formed, those two terms were the ones commonly used to denote practitioners of massage. But even at that early time there was a move to adopt a different name, or at least add a name. As some of the members also used other physical therapies in their work, i.e., drugless therapies, they preferred to be called physio-therapists as was the custom in medical circles. In a 1947 issue of the *Masseur,* the official publication of the A.A.M.M., one such move was documented:

> An amendment to change the name of our association to the American Association of Masseurs and Physio-Therapists, although not properly presented and signed only by the proposer was given consideration because the proposer was unable to be there on the account of a death in the family. It was voted down unanimously as this change

MASSAGE PARLOR
MAE STOVER HUGHES
Member A.A.M.M.
COLON THERAPY
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Take pounds and inches off the easy way. No strenuous diet.
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Ad from 1952 A.A.M.M. Convention Program

(Continued)

would mean considerable expense, also as there are several other Physio-Therapy associations, we as Masseurs & Masseuses are individual and in a class by ourselves not to be confused with any other association.[5]

That the A.A.M.M. was trying to confine their members to practitioners of manual soft tissue manipulation is seen in this resolution from the 1958 Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana:

> That members of other professions of the healing arts may be admitted to the A.A.M.M. Provided: THEY ARE WORKING ONLY AS MASSAGE THERAPISTS AND DO NOT DISPLAY OTHER certificates or use the title of Doctor unless qualified to do so by State law. (A MASSEUR OR MASSEUSE BEING DEFINED AS ONE WHO DEVOTES THE MAJOR PORTION OF EACH TREATMENT TO HAND MASSAGE.)[6]

At that same convention, the name of the organization was changed to The American Massage and Therapy Association. Anne Bergholz, National Secretary-Treasurer from 1962-1973 and National President in 1974 and 1975, reported in *The Massage Journal* that the news media had given the A.A.M.M. "a bad time at the 1958 Indianapolis Convention, which helped bring to a head the decision to change the name to the American Massage & Therapy Association."[7]

> 3 reasons for changing to a new name: We are the only profession having a different classification for male and female. The Masseuse has been brought to disrepute by dishonest operators. By being classified as Massage Therapists we will be placing ourselves in a higher level with additional prestige.[8]

Actually in 1958, the original motion was to change the name to The American Massage Therapy Association. But some states were already having trouble with the State physical therapy laws and operators in those states could not us the term "massage therapy." So the motion was amended to insert "&" between massage and therapy, and the organization would wait another 25 years before the climate was right for using the term "massage therapy."[9]

These early years were a time of identity confusion since massage and physical therapy had just begun to go separate paths with massage therapists more autonomous, and physical therapists under the direction of the medical establishment. The trouble was that many of these early masseurs and masseuses were also trained as physio-therapists, and in many cases both had trained in the same schools of Swedish massage before the appearance of university programs in physical therapy. Both used therapeutic massage, but in some states, the law restricted the modalities that could be used by non-licensed practitioners.

VAPOR BATH MEDICAL GYMNASTIC

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SCIENTIFIC BODY MASSAGE
PHYSIO-THERAPY
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MEMBER A. A. M. M.
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Medical Gymnastics, Sulphur and Mineral Baths
Special Sinus and Foot Treatment
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Foot Reflex Massage
Nerve Treatments a Specialty
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Ads from 1954 A.A.M.M. Convention Program

The A.M. & T.A. in 1958 reflected this confusion in yet another amendment to the constitution which stated the purpose of the A.M. & T.A. is "to advance the science of Massage Therapy, Physical Therapy and related techniques, to raise the standards of these professions so as to merit the respect and confidence of all people."[10]

The issue of achieving an identity separate from physical therapy continued into the next decade. At the 1967 convention in Philadelphia, A.M. & T.A. members heard their newly chosen legal counsel, Kirkpatrick W. Dilling of Chicago, offer a clear cut distinction between physical therapy and massage therapy: "the former is in the 'disease' business and the latter is in the 'health' business."[11]

By 1983, there was a clearer differentiation between physical therapists and massage therapists. Physical therapists were educated at universities, had Bachelor of Science Degrees and State Licenses, and worked in medical settings under the direction of licensed physicians. Massage therapists had various kinds of training in private schools or by apprenticeship, only a few states had licensing, and they worked largely autonomously or in health clubs and beauty salons.

The time was right to change the name of the organization according to the original plan in 1958, and the "&" was dropped leaving it The American Massage Therapy Association. But even as the name changed in 1983, some felt it was already outdated.

The name changes seem to mark at once both the ongoing shift in identity, and the desire to hasten that transition along. By the 1980's, the organization that had grown primarily from the field of medical Swedish-style massage, had begun to redefine its character to include

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other touch therapies. The AMTA was struggling to find a place for the sister arts and sciences such as Reflexology, Acupressure and Shiatsu. A move was made in 1987 to look at the feasibility of approving curricula of Shiatsu and Acupressure schools.[12]

This apparent shift in identity had not happened suddenly (it rarely does), but could be seen as growing slowly but steadily from the beginning. After all, the very first educational session at a National Convention in 1946 featured Eunice D. Ingham giving a lecture-demonstration of Zone Therapy, later known as Reflexology. This was hardly traditional Swedish massage in theory or technique. It appears that there was a demand for knowledge of other touch therapies (in addition to Swedish-style massage) all through the years of the AMTA.

Later conventions featured such topics as "bloodless surgery" (1949), "wireless and super-sonic energy" (1955), "demonstration of magnetic stroking" (1962), "creative healings" (1963), "polarity therapy" (1964), "electrical field forces and the body" and "connective tissue massage" (1974), "film on rolfing" and "mental aspects of administering massage" (1976), "psycho physical integration," "imagery and visualization during a massage," and "Japanese restoration massage" (1980).[13]

With this expanded identity, MASSAGE THERAPY as a general description for the various touch therapies seemed limiting, the term MASSAGE being too closely identified with the traditional Swedish style. Alternative terms were suggested, and some of the more popular ones were BODYWORK, BODYTHERAPY, and SOMA THERAPY. But it was some time before an alternative acceptable to all (or even most) could be agreed upon.

Setbacks in Mid 20th Century

In the 1980's, the field of massage was just beginning to recover from two major setbacks from the post-World War II era. Both setbacks had their origin in the late 19th Century, but came to a head only in the 1940's and 1950's. One was the professionalization of massage within medically and legally controlled physical therapy, where massage lost its identity as a unique natural therapy. Once subsumed by physical therapy, massage was seen as a cure of illness or disorder and lost its identity as a natural health practice.

In addition, with legal control of massage practice focused on the medical aspects, the non-medical type of massage was easy prey for those using massage as a cover for prostitution. Educational standards for non-medical massage were scant or did not exist — almost anyone could hang out a shingle. No one was minding the store, and the favorable image of massage was stolen and replaced by the image of massage as a seedy practice given by women of questionable character. "Masseuse," in the minds of many Americans, became a euphemism for prostitute, and the "massage parlor"a brothel. And unfortunately, this stereotype held true in too many cases both in the cities and the countrysides of America.

While massage had an unsavory image to most Americans of the post World War II era, and most had also never experienced a good legitimate healthful massage, massage service did survive in one of the most respected of American institutions, the Y.M.C.A. Legitimate massage was seen as something given at the "Y" or maybe in some expensive health spa, but the average American was not familiar with massage, and feared the intrusion of the so-called "massage parlors" into their communities. It was reported that the "massage parlor problem" in 1949 in Spokane, Washington resulted in the designing of the A.A.M.M. emblem for office display to identify legitimate massage therapists.[14]

And so within the first six years of its existence, the A.A.M.M. took for itself the task of identifying those massage practitioners who had adequate training and subscribed to a pledge of professionalism. This was an important professional task to assume since most states did not regulate legitimate massage therapy, and by the 1980's the American Massage Therapy Association was well on its way to becoming the nationally recognized professional organization accrediting massage training schools, and offering certification of massage therapists.

Recovery in the Late 20th Century

With the Human Potential Movement of the 1960's and 1970's, and the advent of New Age awareness and the concept of "wellness," massage was rediscovered and became popular in limited circles. Most of this early renewed interest in massage was focused on the West Coast with this new style massage described as Esalen after the Esalen Institute in California. This revived interest in massage as a tool for self-discovery and human development eventually spread to other population centers.

But massage did not become mainstream American experience until the fitness and sports boom of the 1970's and 1980's picked up on massage as a pleasureable adjunct to their athletic efforts, and "sports massage" became a respectable form of massage for Americans. The AMTA quickly recognized need, as

well as opportunity, and began offering certification in sports massage in 1986.

Corporate fitness programs of the 1980's also brought favorable publicity to massage therapy. Designed to keep employees fit and working productively, these employee programs often included office massage given to employees on short breaks, sometimes right at their desks. The invention of the 'on-site' massage chair by David Palmer of California helped make office massage more practical for practitioners, and more attractive to clients.

In addition to sports massage and office massage, there was a general surge of interest in massage for health and relaxation. And so the traditional beauty salons and health and fitness clubs, and the tanning salons popular at the time, often offered some type of massage service. At this point, the demand often outstripped the supply of well-trained massage practitioners.

Curiously, as more good schools were founded in the 1980's to teach massage as a natural therapy and health practice, graduates still often found themselves faced with negative attitudes toward massage, misunderstanding, and prohibitive laws designed to protect communities from the much feared "massage parlors."

So, in addition to the internal professional identity struggles of those practicing massage and other touch therapies, the 1980's presented considerable public image problems and related legal problems for practitioners, hence the attempt to change the image by the use of the terms MASSAGE THERAPY and MASSAGE THERAPIST.

But as is often the case, the cure for one ailment is a problem in another way, and the use of the term THERAPY brought back some of the legal issues related to the practice of medicine and the professionalization of healing. And so in a few instances, the label MASSAGE TECHNICIAN was used. To further distance the practice of massage from medical connotations, use of the term PATIENT was discouraged, and Nissen's term CUSTOMER, was softened to CLIENT to denote the recipient of a touch therapy.

In a living language, words are continually shifting in meaning, and fortunately for MASSAGE THERAPY, the term THERAPY itself began to take on an expanded meaning in the 1980's. No longer relegated to denoting a cure for a disorder, THERAPY was seen also as the prevention of disorders, and to take it one step further, a health measure to achieve optimum wellness (another catch word of the 1980's).

And so, in general terms, by the 1980's a CLIENT would receive MASSAGE THERAPY or THERAPEUTIC BODYWORK from a MASSAGE THERAPIST or BODYWORKER during a SESSION or TREATMENT at an OFFICE or CLINIC.

THE TAIL END

Time and space do not permit a discussion of the next 50 years of history. For now, let me just say that the evolution of the field continued and the touch therapies flourished. As we celebrate our centennial now in 2043, let us commemorate and honor those who held the vision of a world in which natural healing and optimum well being would be achieved through human touch, and remember those changes of terms, focus and image which have marked the path of evolution of our field and our Association.

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